

Tanzania: Role of media to increase understanding and participation in local decision making

BBC Media Action Tanzania reached 8% of the adult population with media content supporting good governance, gender equality, and adaptation to the impact of climate change. The project, A National Conversation, aims to ensure that people feel confident to demand their rights, express their views and participate in meaningful and inclusive local decision-making processes in their communities

Context

In February 2022 we conducted a survey to inform programming with 3000 males and females aged 15 years+ which indicated that less than 10% of respondents thought that people were free to criticize the government. Findings also indicated that more than a third of people have experienced the impact of climate change which affects mainly their livelihoods and lessens the amount of food they have to eat. The formative research findings showed that there was limited civic participation and citizens' influence in decision-making. Traditional and religious beliefs and lack of confidence limit women's civic participation. Young people don't feel they are taken seriously or listened to and local leaders believe communities and citizens are not aware of their rights and lack the confidence to air their views.

The project

BBC Media Action has been running A National Conversation since 2008. A National Conversation Phase 5 (NC5), funded by the government of Belgium and Irish Aid, aims to bridge the gap between citizens and their leaders by providing a platform that allows dialogue where citizens can air their views, question their leaders and make demands. This Phase has introduced and used new local and national radio magazine shows; 'Itika' [Respond] and 'Nijuze' [Inform me], and social media content. It aims to reach men, women and marginalized groups (youth and people with disabilities (PWDs)) to tackle challenges faced around governance, gender and the impact of climate change.

Research methodology

An evaluation of the project was conducted in April 2023 which included an omnibus household survey of 2000 males and females aged 18 years or older in urban and rural locations across the country, using the face-to-face Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) technique. Descriptive analysis using SPSS was carried out to measure the performance of the national show. Two rounds of qualitative research was also conducted in February and June 2023 - Focus group discussions (FGDs) with 'Nijuze' and 'Itika' audiences, aged 25-45 years, in urban and rural localities in six intervention regions and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with 12 local leaders who listened to our local or national shows.

Key findings

The research findings showed that:

- ▶ **Reach: 10% of the adult population across the country were aware of *Itika* show.** Awareness was significantly higher among men but there were no significant differences in awareness among those who reside in urban or rural areas or across different age groups and education.
- **Knowledge: 85% of people reached by *Itika* show reported improved understanding of issues such as gender, climate, livelihood and governance.** Listeners said that they learned, for the first time, about budget processes, the importance of attending public meetings, and the rights of women to participate and contribute to decision-making meetings. Listeners also reported that '*Nijuze*' and '*Itika*' shows shared knowledge about how to prevent gender based violence (GBV) and female listeners said they felt able to report and seek legal aid if they encountered such incidences.
- **Climate adaptation: People felt that *Itika* increased their knowledge around adaptation to climate change.** Listeners said this new knowledge motivated them to use environmentally friendly devices such as modern irrigation and farming, which helped them maintain their livelihood.
- **Women's civic participation: Young women within the target group (25-35 years) who listened to *Itika* were more confident to participate in decision-making processes about the provision of public services** (including access to water and healthcare), livelihoods, gender equality and adaptation to the impacts of climate change – than reported in the baseline survey.
- **Local governance:** Local leaders have been motivated by the local and national shows to emphasize important governance issues, such as ensuring the participation of youths and PWDs as well as incorporating topics around gender and climate change in local

meetings. Some local leaders also reported taking action after listening to the shows e.g. fighting against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), engaging in irrigation farming and sharing knowledge with the community on the effects of climate change and introducing them to other alternative energy sources - particularly biogas after.

"I heard about empowering a woman to participate in community meetings. If you stop a woman from attending these meetings, you have done violence to her because she has the right as a resident of that community to attend the meetings in her society."

Male-FGD participant (36-45 years),
Geita.

Key implications

- The radio shows have been successful in imparting greater knowledge and understanding among the target audiences on issues around gender, climate, governance and livelihood which motivated some citizens and leaders to take action.
- The show has played a greater role in influencing both female and male listeners to attend public meetings but there is low engagement among females in these meetings. There are still existing barriers to women's engagement in the decision-making process and further effort is still needed to help make women more confident and actively engage in decision-making processes.

For further information, please contact Alice.Mbelwa@tz.bbcmmediaaction.org
BBC Media Action's Research and Learning Officer, Tanzania.

Registered office: Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1A 1AA, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 207 481 9797, Email: media.action@bbc.co.uk

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